The Pediatric History Center

“...diphtheria, dysentery, measles, and scarlet fever, (along with) smallpox, influenza, and tuberculosis should certainly be included in the list of common diseases of colonial children. A surprisingly large proportion of them had worms. Deaths from falls, burns, and poisonings were frequent. It seems a little surprising that any of them survived.”

Ernest Caulfield, Pediatric Historian
writing on children in colonial American

Between America’s colonial era and the beginning of the 21st century, the care of children has advanced dramatically.

Old challenges persist and new threats arise, but most US children today are born healthy and remain healthy.

The story of this advancement in caring for children and meeting their special needs is the history of pediatrics.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is documenting that history in its Pediatric History Center. Oral histories, archival documents, artifacts, and historical publications and papers are being collected and preserved.

With its membership of more than 55,000 pediatricians and as a leader in advancing children’s health and well-being for more than 7 decades, the Academy is especially suited to house the Pediatric History Center. Located within the Drs. Harry and Ruth Bakwin Library at AAP headquarters, the center provides an important resource for both AAP members and scholars from other disciplines.

Collections:

The Pediatric History Center’s Holdings chronicle the development of pediatrics in North America while also preserving the history of the Academy itself. Most materials are available for on-site use only and are not available for loan since they are both fragile and irreplaceable. Copying sometimes can be arranged by contacting the archivist.

Oral History Project:

Interviews with selected pediatricians and other leaders in the advancement of children’s health are being conducted and preserved as part of the center’s oral history project. Recordings and transcripts of interviews provide narrative accounts of important development in the care of children and augment the written, recorded, and photographic records of pediatric history. Printed transcripts of these interviews are available for purchase.

This project is supported by donations from individuals, organizations, and corporation. An individual oral history interview can be underwritten for $4,000. For further information about this and other giving and naming opportunities, please contact the archivist.

Archives:

The Pediatric History Center houses the historic and official records of the Academy. Publications, policy statements, selected documents, photographs, and books on AAP history are being preserved as a lasting record and resource on the Academy’s leading

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role in advancing child health. In addition, the center also maintains the archival records of the American Pediatric Society and the Society for Adolescent Medicine.

**Pediatric Artifacts:**
A selection of pediatric artifacts is included in the center. The collection consists of more than 600 feeding utensils and infantalia, primarily from the 19th and 20th centuries, with some dating back to the time of the Roman Empire. The collection provides a fascinating insight into the changes in infant care and feeding over the centuries, including the increasing awareness of the importance of hygiene. The Pediatric History Center lends materials from this collection to qualified institutions for public display.

**Historic Collections:**
Books and papers disclose important insights into the history and development of children’s health care. The Pediatric History Center collects books on medical history and the social history childhood, historically important pediatric texts and rare books, photographs and videotapes, and manuscripts and personal papers of selected individuals who have worked to enrich the lives of children and improve their health.

**Pediatric History Center Mission:**
The AAP Pediatric History Center is dedicated to preserving and cataloguing historical and contemporary documents and artifacts pertaining to the health care of children. It also serves as the repository of the archives of the American Academy of Pediatrics. This center provides a resource for AAP members, child health care professionals, scholars, and others interested in child health issues and pediatric medicine.

**Contributions:**
The Academy welcomes contributions to the Pediatric History Center. Donors are encouraged to make financial gifts in support of the general operations of the center or to contribute to areas of special interest within the collection. Since space in the center is limited, a collection policy has been established, and all historic documents and artifacts to the center will be reviewed by the AAP archivist before being accepted.

To learn more about the Pediatric History Center and its collections, please contact us by either of the following:

- call: 847/434-7093
- email: history@aap.org

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